DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 448 965 RC 022 725

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TITLE Unified Education System: From Implementation to Evaluation, 1997-98.
INSTITUTION Albuquerque Public Schools, NM. Research, Development, and Accountability.
PUB DATE 1999-03-00
NOTE 23p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Attitudes; American Indian Education; Bilingual Education; Change Strategies; *Educational Change; *Educational Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; *Organizational Change; Participative Decision Making; Professional Development; Program Evaluation; *Program Implementation; Regular and Special Education Relationship; School Organization; Special Education; Teacher Collaboration
IDENTIFIERS *Albuquerque Public Schools NM; Systemic Change

ABSTRACT

In 1995, the Albuquerque (New Mexico) school district devised a plan to merge special education, cross-cultural education, Indian education, and Title I with the general education program, designated the Unified Education System (UES). Considering the abrupt implementation of UES in the first year and subsequent confusion regarding staff positions and roles, an evaluation was conducted at the administrative level during the third year of implementation. Thirty-seven assistant superintendents, operational staff, management in special services, other administrators, and program support specialists participated. Findings indicate that five of the six components necessary for change--vision, necessary context, decision making, skills, and action plans--were well recognized by respondents. There was surprising unanimity of vision for the future of UES. Recognition of the importance of interpersonal support was evidenced by efforts to build esprit de corps and recognize individual achievement toward UES. Respondents acknowledged the importance of dispersed decision making in facilitating large-scale buy-in of UES. Respondents valued people skills as a means of efficiently distributing specific expertise to those needing support. Respondents reported frustration that implementation of instructional improvement at the school level came out of teachers' existing schedules and personal time, and that collaboration time was lacking at the classroom level. Nevertheless, respondents readily discussed action plans that may ensure continued progress towards UES. An appendix presents survey questions and planning matrix. (TD)

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Unified Education System: From Implementation to Evaluation

Albuquerque Public Schools 1997-98

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UNIFIED EDUCATION SYSTEM:
FROM IMPLEMENTATION TO EVALUATION

INTRODUCTION: CHRONOLOGY OF IMPLEMENTATION

In the spring of 1995 school year, Stephen Moody was given the task of developing a new operational plan for Special Education, the seventh district goal established by the new superintendent, Peter Horoschak. Special Education had functionally duplicated many structures already set up for non-special education services. Special Education had its own technology, curriculum, staffing and budget departments. Mr. Moody sought wide input from groups of principals, related service provider groups, special education staff, teachers, parents and advocacy groups. Unified Education System of Special Education that Ensures Success for All Students was the title given to the plan for reorganizing Special Education and merging its functions with the general education program. The plan for implementation of Unified Education System (UES) called for a three-to-five year transition process.

THE 1995-1996 SCHOOL YEAR

Special Services

During 1995-96 a new position was filled, the Special Services director, who is responsible for Cross-Cultural, Indian Education, Special Education and Title I. Since each of these departments provided services based on a similar pullout intervention model of service delivery and often targeted the same students, these programs were all included under the UES umbrella. This meant that the district was committed to reorganizing to maximize the impact of coordinated special services. Non-school site support positions were eliminated or redefined in Special Education, Title I and Cross-Cultural Unit. The year was characterized by restructuring the budgets and reorganizing services in each of the Special Services departments.

Special Education

Most of the changes recommended in the plan were implemented during the first year. New positions were created at all levels of job classification, and many existing positions were discontinued. In order to fill the newly created positions many Special Education staff members required professional development. Personnel supervising staff in new positions were often filling new positions themselves. The basic functioning of each job position was being worked out on-site as the transition to the Unified Education System occurred.

Much effort was spent in placing evaluation specialists at schools. This posed a new set of problems in delivering diagnostic services. Common sites previously allowed these staffs to share materials from a pool. Site based organization required massive acquisition and allocation of resources. Space had to be negotiated at each site, and then basic resources had to be supplied.

Shortly before the end of the school year an evaluation of the changes in Special Education was commissioned. The goal of this process evaluation was to describe the implementation of UES in Special Education.

Cross-Cultural

Changes began to occur in the Cross-Cultural Unit as well. The non-school support positions of bilingual specialist were eliminated which led to organizational and budget restructuring. The Cross-Cultural Unit contibuted to the funding of the region assistants. New ways to provide services with reduced staff were planned. These changes preceded the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) Agreement for Corrective Action with Albuquerque Public Schools (APS). The newly appointed Cross-Cultural supervisor was deeply involved in negotiating this corrective action which would ultimately have a significant impact on the role of Cross-Cultural Unit in UES.

Title I

Changes in Title I included elimination of region based specialists that led to organizational and budget restructuring. The newly created Region Team Assistant position was partially supported by Title I funding. New ways to provide services were examined through pilot reading programs that were offered to Title I schools qualifying for school improvement. Title I continued closely coordinating services with other Special Services departments.

It appears that the Title I supervisor had a clear vision of the programs' role in achieving a UES. The supervisor began laying the foundation for achieving the vision without having fully articulated the vision to staff. Thus, the restructuring appeared to some as unguided. As the year progressed, the vision of UES became more clearly articulated, thus making structural changes more meaningful to program staff.

Indian Education

The Indian Education Office staff focused on resolving issues related to State Department of Education's (SDE) citations using the principles of UES. Steps were taken to begin formulating the Indian Education comprehensive plan. Evaluations of services were also planned. While Indian Education was poised to contribute significantly to the philosophy of UES, the coordinator was focused on the resolution of issues related to SDE situations. These situations provided more opportunity for Indian Education to develop the UES philosophy.

THE 1996-1997 SCHOOL YEAR

Special Services (1996-97)

To coordinate the functioning of Special Services departments, supervisors participated in facilitated joint planning. This facilitation served to inform supervisors of areas of possible coordination and collaboration. Additionally, twice monthly meetings were scheduled so the Special Services supervisors could continue the coordination and collaboration progress

towards UES. Initially program supervisors had concerns of how time consuming the twice-monthly meetings would be and the potential outcome of the meetings. After participating in the meetings, supervisors found much common ground, and that the twice-monthly meetings provided the forum to capitalize on this resource.

A two-day conference was organized at the beginning of the year that included Region Assistants and Special Services administrative staffs. The conference served to help clarify the roles of Region Assistants in supporting the implementation of UES at the schools. Once these roles were established, the workgroup focused on the support Region Assistants needed from special services staff and program directors. Special Services supervisors identified overlapping functions, consolidated efforts in these areas and freed up resources for other UES activities.

To make the UES efforts more concrete, a major focus during 1996-97 was on merging budget items for which departmental functions had merged. Examples of shared funding of projects are listed below under the specific special service. The OCR Response Team and the Literacy Core Team provided opportunities to demonstrate programmatic collaboration. The UES Core Team expanded to include input from all special programs.

A complicating factor to UES efforts was the district's response to OCR findings. The Agreement for Corrective Action required the creation of interim positions in the Cross-Cultural Unit. Training was necessary for the new site based ESL resource teachers and the new Itinerant ESL resource teachers. In addition to training support personnel to implement the new procedures, the OCR agreement required significant professional development. Plans were made to provide every teacher in the district with 48 hours of LEP training, and eight of were to begin this year. The OCR agreement for corrective action required the creation of new procedures that were developed within the Special Services department but were to be implemented by staff outside their department, for example, principals, teachers and RDA staff. These complicating factors consumed staff time in Strategic Professional Development to the point of limiting the other kinds of professional development they could offer. As OCR obligations were implemented, Strategic Professional Development (SPD) immediately began to work on UES professional development projects.

It is generally recognized that early professional development is critical to the implementation of a successful reorganization of program structure and philosophy. However, the vehicle for providing this training, SPD, was consumed by the demands of meeting the requirements of the Agreement for Corrective Action. SPD did not have the resources to develop nor deliver the professional development required to support the changes involved in UES. Thus, the UES concept lost its initial momentum. The 1995 Unified Education Plan that Ensures Success for All Students acknowledges the major role that Strategic Professional Development will play in implementing UES. Additionally, topics of training issues are suggested based on surveys and focus groups. However, the document's focus devoted to professional development was not commensurate with need. Strategic Professional Development was left with conceptualizing the need and developing the actual service. Practical matters such as personnel training, staffing and budget for the increased

training needs are not mentioned in the UES Plan. Strategic Professional Development had no opportunity to accommodate the retraining required by the changes toward a UES because of the immediate need to meet the requirements of the OCR agreement.

Special Education (1996-97)

The district hired a new Special Education supervisor who developed a budget process that supported the site-based administration of Special Education and the principles of UES. The supervisor of Special Education initiated the process for training those individuals in new positions as well as those who were entirely new to the field. The supervisor directed the newly created position of Program Support Specialists as well as managed the expanded role of the site based evaluation specialists.

After aligning the budget the first year, the Special Education supervisor concentrated organizational efforts on three areas (1) clarifying the new roles of special education personnel, (2) streamlining programmatic procedures, and (3) fulfilling the resource needs of newly created positions. In order to identify difficulties that Program Support Specialists (PSS) had in understanding their roles, the supervisor met individually with every PSS on a regular basis. Results of this informal evaluation led to clarification of the Program Support Specialists' roles. Problem solving and clarification of Special Education staff roles occurred during the monthly meetings of Special Education staff. The Special Education department provided UES training for principals to help them understand the changes in the relationships between each of the Special Services as well as the roles of the new personnel available at their sites including Program Support Specialists and Evaluation Specialists.

Another area of concentration was the streamlining of programmatic procedures. Evaluation Specialists were available to consult with teachers on classroom methods in order to intervene at early stages of student difficulty. Additionally, evaluation specialists began to intervene with students prior to Special Education eligibility by participating in support teams. The Unified Education System placement of Evaluation Specialists on site provides a mechanism to reduce the number of students referred to Special Education.

Financial considerations to accommodate relocating evaluation specialists were unrecognized in the original plan for reorganization. Therefore, a financial commitment was made to complete the task of providing all necessary resources for the evaluation specialists to function at their site. Locking file cabinets were an essential component to fulfilling confidentiality regulations in a site based program. Although a shared resource in the past, word processors were a necessity at each site because of the heavy paperwork requirements and the limited access to clerical support.

The commissioned evaluation report of the changes in Special Education was released during this year and embodied four general areas of concerns. The first concern targeted rapid implementation. New job positions required staff development, but none existed. This lack of staff preparation led to poorly defined roles for many of the new positions as well as for the former positions that had been changed. The external evaluation noted that line staff felt administrative modeling of UES was missing. The second area of concern focused on

communication infrastructure problems. By moving evaluation specialists to individual sites, communication and collaboration structures that had easily and informally occurred at the "central site" were broken. No scheduled professional interactions had been planned to replace the convenience of the previous central staffing situation. The third concern mentioned inconsistent compliance resulting from general education staff with no special education training being included in federally regulated procedures. The fourth area of concern mentioned a lack of resources. Evaluation specialists arrived on site and had few resources (desks, computers, telephones, etc.) necessary for processing their caseloads.

The identification of needs in the Special Education reorganization was facilitated by several debriefings with the external evaluator. While the Special Education evaluation report was being written, the new Special Education supervisor anticipated the majority of the observations of the evaluation report and found ways to proactively remedy the problems.

Cross-Cultural (1996-97)

The Cross-Cultural Unit began to coordinate efforts with other Special Services. The Cross-Cultural Unit and Indian Education collaborated to produce a Title VII grant proposal that ultimately received funding. A Native American language task force was established beginning with Navajo language. Cross-Cultural staff participated as judges in the Indian Education Knowledge Quest. By combining their libraries, Cross-Cultural and Indian Education emphasized the similarities in their educational goals and methods. To meet the districts' obligation to students and to the Office for Civil Rights, collaborations among many departments were characterized by successful efforts at identifying targeted students. Those students were first identified as Primary Home Language Other Than English (PHLOTE), and then their English language proficiency was assessed.

Collaboration between the Cross-Cultural Unit and Special Education spanned the educational program. The Cross-Cultural Unit and Special Education collaborated to produce cross training for ESL resource teachers and evaluation specialists. This helped to ensure that best practice was in place for Special Education students with diverse language and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, better identification of Special Education students with ESL needs occurred. Special Education teachers and ESL teachers began to problem solve together to meet individual student needs at the classroom level. Cross-Cultural administrators assisted in training teachers at support team inservices.

The Cross-Cultural Unit provided Itinerant ESL Resource teachers to serve the general education teachers who required assistance with methods and materials issues within their classroom.

Indian Education (1996-97)

Indian Education concentrated on two major activities this year; they produced a new departmental plan and they aligned practices with the Cross-Cultural Unit. The staff of the Indian Education office initiated and collaborated in the grant writing process that lead to the funding of a Title VII grant. They coordinated with the Cross-Cultural Unit to offer native language instruction at schools where students' home language is not English.

In addition to these major activities, Indian Education staff collaborated with Title I and Special Education staffs as well as providing service to general education teachers. Native American students received special Title I services as a result of coordinating departmental efforts and funding. Indian Education specified issues pertinent to Native American students in material prepared for the Support Team manual. Indian Education staff provided funding for substitute teachers, so general education teachers could attend an Indian Education inservice. An Indian Education consultant telephone line was established where teachers may receive immediate responses to questions they have regarding available services.

Title I (1996-97)

Title I staff concentrated integration of program efforts with general education at the school level. Title I provided substitute teacher funding for general education teachers, so Title I teachers and general education teachers could collaborate in planning alternative methods for students with special needs. Team teaching was encouraged in targeted assistance sites. Title I de-emphasized pullout reading and math programs, although at times classes were mixed and/or reconstituted (a modified type of pull out) depending on teaching goals. Title I teachers are a part of required monthly school planning team meetings in all school wide designated schools. Each Title I school has at least one Title I teacher on support team.

Title I concentrated funding efforts towards unification by supplying other services with the financial link to Title I. For example, Indian Education received five Title I teachers to serve their population. Title I has been hiring Bilingual and ESL certified staff who use more bilingual materials. Title I provided funding to supplement LEP training.

Summary of 1996-1997 School Year

Identifying program components, such as duplicate services and gaps in services, and then finding solutions to those components characterized this year. Collaborative efforts between departments provided the most successful problem solving methods. Although many problems remained to be solved there began to be an understanding that the difficult road to Unified Education System looked promising.

THE 1997-1998 SCHOOL YEAR: CURRENT RESEARCH

This year the Special Services staff organized targeted training to increase understanding of the interactive functioning of the Special Services and their related budget implications. Early in the year, schools that received Cross-Cultural and Title I services were invited to attend two training symposia that covered topics such as needs assessment, budget implications, the Educational Plan for Student Success, and learning styles. In addition to the training sessions, two invited symposia were organized. The purpose of the first symposium provided a forum for comments from selected sites that had been making notable progress towards UES. The second symposium celebrated the outstanding success at one school and provided a demonstration of differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction is the classroom tool that is recommended as one method of replacing the old pull out program.

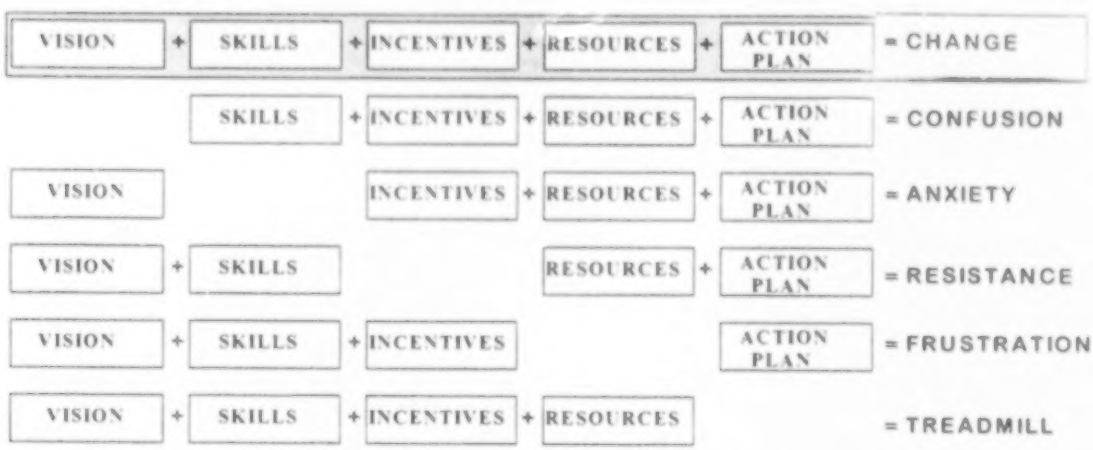
Differentiated instruction is sufficiently general to be used as a teaching method in any of the Special Services.

Considering the abrupt implementation of UES in the first year and the subsequent confusion regarding staff positions and roles, an evaluation was planned at the administrative level. A set of interviews and surveys were conducted to identify the existence of the various components required for successful systemic change. The interview questions are based on the systems change literature that is current in the field of education today.

Researchers who write about managing complex change (Thousand & Villa; 1995, Knoster, in press) find that five components are helpful for organizing complex systemic change (see Figure 1). These components are vision, skills, incentives, resources and action plan. If any one component is missing, then a corresponding result is likely. Without a clear vision, staff may exhibit confusion when implementing the changes. Without appropriate skills, staff may exhibit anxiety when implementing changes. Staff exhibit resistance when incentives for change are missing, and a lack of resources to implement change causes frustration. Finally, without an action plan, staff may work tirelessly, as if on a treadmill, without making progress. Other research points up the necessity of providing interpersonal support for staff involved in changing systems (Villa et. al., 1996; Janney et. al. 1995).

Figure 1

MANAGING COMPLEX CHANGE


VISION + SKILLS + INCENTIVES + RESOURCES + ACTION PLAN = CHANGE
SKILLS + INCENTIVES + RESOURCES + ACTION PLAN = CONFUSION
VISION + INCENTIVES + RESOURCES + ACTION PLAN = ANXIETY
VISION + SKILLS + RESOURCES + ACTION PLAN = RESISTANCE
VISION + SKILLS + INCENTIVES + ACTION PLAN = FRUSTRATION
VISION + SKILLS + INCENTIVES + RESOURCES = TREADMILL

Adapted from R. A. Villa & J. S. Thousand (1996) Creating an Inclusive School. Alexandra, VA: Association for Supervision of Curriculum Development

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METHOD

This process evaluation inventoried the status of each component necessary to manage complex change. The questions were designed to elicit discussion of the various topics without leading respondents. Participants included assistant superintendents, operational staff, management in special services, other department directors, region assistants and program support specialists.[1] Administrators were interviewed in person by the evaluation coordinator. Region assistants and program support specialists wrote responses to the same set of questions. There were 37 respondents using both surveys and interviews. The questions used to elicit responses about UES are presented in italics.

Content analysis was used to sort the responses into categories. All questions yielded responses that could be analyzed within the context of the components of change: vision, interpersonal support, skills, incentives, resources and action plan.

LIMITATIONS

One question (context necessary) produced only a 78% response rate in terms of categories that were analyzed and should be interpreted cautiously. Because questions elicited responses about what people thought UES ideally would look like, the responses are a guide for future planning, not for diagnostic purposes.

RESULTS

Vision

What is your vision of Unified Education System in a perfect world as it relates to your job?

Three categories of comments were identified for the first question: (a) definitions, (b) budget comments, and (c) problem statements. Of 37 respondents, 81% used definitional terms. Nine respondents (24%) mentioned problems to be solved in addition to making definitional comments. Respondents mentioned gaps in services and duplicate services as problems to be solved. Those making definitional statements as well as problem solving statements tended to be directors. Budget comments were made in conjunction with definitional statements by 19% of respondents while 11% only used budget statements. Three of the 37 respondents used all three; definitions, budget and problem statements, in their responses.

Respondents say, in many different ways, that UES is a way to break out of the "egg carton" model of education. UES is seen as a way to provide input to a classroom of diverse students where teachers have the expertise in subject matter and classroom activities and where they receive support, on the spot, to help them meet the students' diverse learning needs. In this model students have access to resources that meet their individual instructional

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[1]Three individuals did not participate. One assistant superintendent abstained due to a scheduling conflict, and another due to perceived lack of involvement with UES. One director abstained due to involvement with planning this evaluation.

needs. All resources are seen as available to all students. Respondents' vision of UES is one in which support staff are available to provide the classroom teacher with specific information, techniques and materials designed to meet the individual needs of students about whom the classroom teacher is concerned. This support would be available whether those needs are cross-cultural, linguistic, special education, reading, or assessment of special needs. Respondents acknowledge that it is unreasonable to expect teachers to have expertise in areas that they rarely encounter, and that support staff provide a means for teachers to access and implement methods that meet diverse student needs with known successful methods. Cooperation and collaboration of support staff and teachers is necessary to ensure that services are directed to those students who require special services to succeed.

Additionally, the vision includes budget concerns related to ensuring that moneys fund the services that meet the diversity of individual student needs. Such a budget component is complex because the expenditures must meet the regulations and requirements of the funding source while affording maximum flexibility. Historically, the district provided parallel services in different departments such as reading tutors provided by both Title I and Indian Education. Additionally, the district maintained duplicate structures such as curriculum development in special education and for the district at large. Through careful coordination and planning the district may meet its expenditure requirements as well as exercising increased flexibility in the services it provides. With student needs as a central focus of spending, decisions about spending are clarified. This is the budget function of UES.

One could argue that UES may first appear to be a budgetary issue only, but the majority of respondents consider it an instructional change. It is important to note that one in five respondents saw budget issues influencing the vision of UES. The interaction between the instructional goals of UES and the budgetary issues is illuminated by the comments respondents made about problems that a UES was designed to solve. Respondents mentioned filling gaps in services and removing duplicate services as problems which UES was designed to solve. Multiple Federal funding sources that overlap in target populations created duplicate services. The UES emphasis on ensuring that all students receive the services they are eligible for represents the district commitment to closing gaps in services and a commitment to maximize Federal dollars and valuable staff.

As the following components of systemic change continue to evolve, the UES vision will evolve correspondingly. With every new mechanism, and with appropriate collaboration and cooperation, the vision of UES will become clearer and more specific.

Skills

What skills does the staff you work with need for a Unified Education System to be successful?

Three categories were mentioned: (a) knowledge, (b) cross training, and (c) people skills. No one mentioned that particular skills or expertise were lacking within the district. Instead, 67% of respondents indicated that some kind of knowledge was needed. Respondents mentioned that their staffs needed knowledge about UES (16%), general knowledge of all programs (19%), and specific knowledge and expertise of a particular field (40%). Cross

training was mentioned by 14% of respondents as important. People skills were mentioned as important by 51% of respondents. Directors in particular found people skills necessary for their staffs.

Informal observation early in the UES implementation discovered an important discussion about the level of expertise needed by teachers and support staff. Some individuals conceived of UES as a use of general knowledge by practitioners. Today, twice as many people indicate that specific knowledge and expertise are important. Respondents mentioned the requirement of expertise and the requirement of people skills independently, but implied a connection. Only when district support staff possess good communication, interpersonal and presentation skills, can teachers fully take advantage of the resident expertise of district support staff.

Region Assistants and Program Support Specialists often work to coordinate support services at the practitioner level. Thousand & Villa (1995) highlight the notion of "collective skill" to show that access to the skills of another staff member is the same as having them yourself. Respondents' mention of the importance of cross training is more evidence of willingness to maintain expertise while bolstering general knowledge and communication among support staff. One respondent said this:

> "Depth – not necessary for other Special Services as long as we know when and where to go for help. There must be depth in our own field but you must know where your own knowledge stops. Skills needed: mediation skills, facilitation skills, communication skills (written and verbal)."

Respondents see communication and people skills as the mechanisms that distribute the already existing abundance of professional skills to the individual teachers and students who need assistance. These skills are also seen as the mechanism for reaching decisions based on a consensus of participants. One respondent made the pointed suggestion that management could exemplify UES by using "differentiated management" methods. The suggestion refers to identifying strengths and weaknesses of staff administrators, and using such information to plan the custom services to teachers and students. Respondents see UES as a way to distribute skills by identifying special student needs, integrating district resources and customizing classroom instruction.

Context Necessary

What is the context necessary for the staff you work with to function in a Unified Education System?

A total of 76% of respondents noted the need for some kind of social support. Respondents noted 39% of the time the importance of interpersonal support during the change toward UES. Another 60% of respondents noted the importance of professional support. Assistant superintendents and directors tended to be more aware of the need for both interpersonal and professional supports.

Professional support could be considered any kind of UES training for staff and teachers. In school year 1997-98, Special Services provided four training opportunities for

school staff who work most frequently with Special Services departments. Beginning such training on small portions of a complex system has been shown to increase buy-in on the part of reluctant participants (Janney et al., 1995).

Interpersonal support is recognized by respondents as a key ingredient to facilitating system wide changes. Many respondents noted the importance of encouraging staff risk taking to try new procedures and methods. One respondent emphasized that it was "okay to find that something didn't work", but that administrators must encourage "educated risk taking." Educated risk taking would require staff to communicate about the issues to be solved as well as about what is known in the field. Free exchange of information about success and failures coupled with the acknowledgment that "failure is okay", will lead to incremental improvement in services and ultimately in student outcomes. Once risk taking is encouraged, staff involved in the changes should not be micromanaged. Micromanaging sends the message that failure is not okay and that the staff lacks qualities to make the project succeed.

Interpersonal supports are by definition non-structured and beyond the scope of this evaluation. Personal praise and acknowledgment of contributions toward UES exemplify types of interpersonal support. Appraisal feedback separate from personnel evaluation is another type of interpersonal support. Appraisal support could begin by asking UES participants what motivates them to engage in UES activities, or what makes them feel valued as a UES participant, or what makes them feel respected as a participant in UES. Then when participants engage in UES activities, administrators will know how to support the participants in a manner that suits the participants. Considering respondent awareness of the importance of interpersonal support, one could assume that such support is probably provided on an implicit level. District personnel may find ways to bolster interpersonal support by explicitly discussing the issue during planning events.

Part of interpersonal support is building an *esprit de corps*. Since part of the vision of UES is collaboration and cooperation, cross training on various support level jobs would improve the services provided to teachers and students, as well as add to building *esprit de corps*. By paying teachers for their time at the UES training symposia, teachers were treated professionally which contributed to *esprit de corps*. Coming together as a district to educate parents and community about UES changes provides another opportunity to build *esprit de corps* among staff that participate in planning and presenting UES to the public.

Respondents felt that interpersonal support is at times undermined by the regulations that require separate documentation or program components. When making changes toward UES, respondents who repeatedly encounter regulatory obstacles become discouraged. With a combination of *esprit de corps* and community buy-in, staff may tolerate regulatory obstacles without becoming as discouraged. However, overseers of UES may keep close watch on managing any discouragement.

Decision Making

What incentives for change influence decision making, and how is leadership distributed?

This question reflects two facets of decision making that leads to change. There must be some incentive to change and decisions may be executive or by consensus.

Respondents most often mentioned student performance and professional development opportunity as incentives for change. One individual saw no incentives for change, and another saw negative incentives for change such as loosing funding if s/he did not change.

Only 43% of the respondents mentioned the distribution of leadership. All but one of those indicated that more than one individual was responsible for decisions. The one remaining individual said the work was delegated and not micromanaged, implying that decisions were influenced at the implementation level. No respondent mentioned decision making as an individual endeavor.

Literature on systems change suggests that gaining buy-in from various stakeholder groups is difficult if they are not included in the decision making process (Villa et. al., 1996; Janney et. al., 1995). Those who are left to make the daily implementation decisions require some incentive to change. Although salary incentives are important, the majority of respondents saw the incentive of increased student achievement as the first point to mention. Janney et. al. (1995) quote a principal saying that all he had to do was convince a few teachers that the change was better for students. After those few teachers tried the new program and found success, other reluctant teachers asked to try the new methods. One APS survey respondent said

> "In some schools, leadership is at grade and program level. That is good if it is always checked against a larger school vision. The principal must facilitate, nurture and support (verbally, emotionally, and with resources) teachers' efforts to be unified. Too often the inclusion results from a direct and personal collaboration between teachers; it often ends when one or more of that teaching team departs. That means it's not institutionalized as a part of school culture, but more the result of a personal, professional decision of teachers."

Another said:

> "...Rewarding schools, administrators, teachers for implementing UES, setting standards, so everyone understands what a quality UES looks like. I don't believe it is a question of leadership being distributed as much as it should be responsibility being distributed among all who are responsible for UES."

Respondents recognized that if there was no constant drive for improved student performance, incentives for change would be imposed from regulating agencies, parents, community, newspaper and etc. Incentives for change mentioned by respondents generally centered on student performance and the educational environment. They recognized that physical and emotional safeties are an important part of the educational environment. Administrators wanted to see improved student performance and were confident that teachers would respond to that incentive. Additionally, some respondents mentioned that salary considerations influenced decision making by expecting too much from teachers without appropriate compensation.

Of the 14 individuals who were expected to have action plans, 12 articulated them. Two respondents easily provided action plans from files. The two who responded that they had no action plan could easily show that the UES goal was written into their department goal.

Review of action plan comments showed a clear and directed effort toward UES. When discussing action plans, two administrators independently indicated the need to collaborate in more depth with the other, yet no contact had been made. If administrators reviewed their UES action plans in a group at the beginning of the school year, they may find that collaboration between departments is facilitated.

Other Notable Responses

Three individuals mentioned inconvenient geographic distribution of district staff with whom they must collaborate regularly. They saw the distributed location of various departments as an impediment to easy and necessary communication. They acknowledged that no single facility was available to house all of the individuals who need to collaborate and communicate. Two of the individuals who mentioned the issue recognized that the geographic problems might cease to be an issue once they are readily able to access one another through electronic media. A delay in connecting administrative staff electronically may delay important communication between various departments who must collaborate under a UES.

Respondents mentioned that differentiated pay might ease the constant shortage of qualified staff to fill site based special services teaching positions (bilingual and special education). Local universities train bilingual and special education teachers for the profession. APS administrators fear that prospective and resident teachers will move to states paying them more money when other states, that offer differentiated pay, advertise job openings in the area. Administrators constantly work with shortages of qualified practitioners in the various special services while a work force is trained in the same town.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The district's commitment to providing services to students within the general education classroom means that teachers will receive support in their classrooms. The challenge of UES is to ensure that support reaches all students through their teachers. Some support service is given directly to students, for example, physical therapy. Other support is offered for teachers to use in the classroom, such as differentiated instruction or Itinerant ESL services. All support is intended to ultimately influence students, although the support may be directed to the teacher. The first step is for teachers to identify students who need additional support in their classroom. The second step is for the teacher to know where to get the service and that the service meets the need promptly. UES requires coordinated services at the classroom level, the school level and the district level. As the years pass, more mechanisms of implementing UES will be developed for each of these levels.

Day-to-day decision making was seen as a group process by most respondents. Members of the "group" included parents, teachers and community members as well as district personnel. One respondent commented that a well-known axiom in administrative literature is that "in order to build power, you must give it away." Another respondent observed that the person delivering service is the key decision-maker. Decisions that failed to reach the classroom level were not seen as effective decisions.

Resources

What resources do you and your staff need for a Unified Education System to be successful?

Training, mostly general training, was seen by 38% of respondents as a necessary resource. Collaboration time was seen by 30% of respondents as necessary. Staffing resources were seen as necessary for 27% of respondents. Nearly all directors commented that staffing resources were necessary.

It is notable that respondents failed to mention a shortage of materials. Since administrators mentioned needing training, time for collaboration and staffing, clearly they intend to provide support services directly to schools and teachers. Indeed professional literature repeatedly comments on the lack of preparation provided at the preservice level and the burden of staff development placed on the district itself (Belcher, 1997). One interviewee said:

> "... but there needs to be more time for teacher development and for collaboration to improve education at the student level. You can either pay them to work longer days or for more days, or you can hire staff to assist in these functions, but it all comes down to money. There needs to be professional non-student time somewhere in the schedule."

Others repeated similar statements:

> "I'm very impressed with the expertise we have in all departments; however, we need more quality time for collaboration., such as team building, communication, workflow and professional development could help."

Respondents generally recognize that new societal demands for higher levels of performance for all students requires a level of expertise and collaboration among staff never before imagined by educators. This new responsibility translates into time for staff coordination and problem solving at the individual student level which can not occur during classroom time. Since teachers are the individuals who contact students directly, respondents see the need to buy time for teachers to collaborate with support staff away from students in order to meet modern educational goals. Professional time written into teacher contracts is seen as essential to accomplishing a UES. Since APS has been committed to site based management, the school principals have seen a similar increase in responsibility. Respondents noted that this has been without the corresponding increase in compensation.

Action Plan

Action Plan, do you have one? If not, describe steps of development and how far you are.

occasional support. Respondents never mentioned lacking space or instructional materials; however, they felt staffing, collaboration time and training were still needed to advance the APS goals. The lack of collaboration time at the classroom level has led to frustration of support staff and classroom teacher alike. Respondents are frustrated that the time required for implementation of instructional improvement at the school level must be carved out of teachers' existing schedules and personal time. Even with this frustration, respondents readily discussed action plans that may ensure continued progress towards a Unified Education System.

Current literature on systems change evolved from the movement toward inclusive schooling, and suggests that 4-6 years (Villa et. al., 1996) or even 5-7 years (Thousand & Villa, 1995) are necessary to see a complete systemic change. Albuquerque Public Schools chose a goal to support success for all students that requires all support services to take responsibility for individual students at the classroom level. By choosing to integrate more than just Special Education, APS raised the level of complexity. Change toward UES will be slow. Nevertheless, the progress in the last few years shows that the vision of UES has grown past the difficult initial implementation of the first year.

There is a lot of effort district wide to improve the coordination of services, so all students receive the services they require. So far, coordination efforts have been most significant on two fronts: (a) within services that support students (Special Services and Student Support Services) and (b) among school support services (Research, Development & Accountability, Strategic Professional Development and Instructional Support Services). For the 1998-1999 school year, respondents mentioned the expectation that the services that support students and the school support services would begin to coordinate to a greater degree. Currently there is a consistent vision of an ability to provide a variety of coordinated services to every student within APS.

The expectation that services that support students and school support services will collaborate to a greater extent, should be moderated by the appreciation that there is still much coordination to be accomplished within each of the two groups. Respondents occasionally mentioned the "territorial" behaviors of other departments as examples of the need to communicate and collaborate more extensively.

Informal observations of people discussing the mechanisms of UES often result in the question "How does UES differ from good instructional practice?" One mechanism of UES is any method that allows custom instruction within the classroom to students (e.g., differentiated instruction). Another mechanism provides on-call support for teachers who encounter student needs that they are not prepared to meet (e.g., Itinerant ESL teachers). A third mechanism is the ability to provide broad services to a student (e.g., team teaching). All of these mechanisms have rich histories in education. Administrators involved with the changes towards UES may face challenges that they are not proposing anything new. In the age of apparently seasonal education reform movements, UES administrators may acknowledge that their movement entails a common thread that all instructionally sound practices possess, without claiming to be pioneering new mechanisms. The common thread would be some mechanism of ensuring success for individual students. Indeed, seasoned professionals may take offense to hearing old methods being touted as new reforms. UES is more a means of communicating and taking advantage of district strengths than it is a name for pioneering new methods.

Of the six components necessary for complex change, five appear to be well recognized by respondents – vision, context necessary, decision making, skills, and action plans. Considering the compressed initial implementation of UES, there is surprising unanimity of vision for the future of UES. Constantly reviewing the vision may ensure that participants continue to develop plans that coordinate their activities. Respondents readily recognized the importance of interpersonal support for staff members who participate in system wide change. Efforts to build *esprit de corps* and otherwise recognize individual achievement toward UES may provide expression of the current informal efforts. Respondents see the necessity for dispersed decision making to facilitate large scale buy-in of UES. Large scale buy-in is more easily produced when participants become part of the decision making process. Decision making processes may be facilitated by clearly articulating the incentives for change toward UES. People skills and specific expertise are highly valued by respondents. Respondents see people skills as a means of efficiently distributing specific expertise to those who need the

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APPENDIX A

PROMPTS

What is your **Vision** of Unified Education System in a perfect world as it relates to your job.

What is the **Context Necessary** for the staff you work with to function in a Unified Education System.

What incentives for change influence **Decision Making**, and how is leadership distributed?

What **Skills** does the staff you work with need for a Unified Education System to be successful.

What **Resources** do you and your staff need for a Unified Education System to be successful.

Action Plan, do you have one?

PLANNING MATRIX

Findings/Conclusions	Supporting Rationale/Data	Party Involved	Time Line	Rationale for Deferring Action
1. Add new mechanisms for appropriate cooperation, coordination and collaboration among the programs/services making up the primary focus of UES. (page 9)	The vision of UES has evolved from its philosophical beginning to its current practical expression. There are currently limited numbers of mechanisms for unification at participation and program levels.			
2. Provide appraisal/feedback separate from a personnel evaluation. (page 10)	Staff in positions that must implement UES are not receiving the full spectrum of interpersonal supports for the dramatic changes that must occur.			
3. Cross-train support personnel and cross-train management personnel. (page 10)	Respondents commented that cross-training built *esprit de corps* and helped improve the various referral processes.			
4. Continue distributed decision making. (page 12)	Respondents credit distributed decision making for the current success of UES.			
5. Implement training in differentiated management practices. (page 13)	Respondents want to see examples of differentiated management.			
6. Provide examples and opportunities for school staff to incorporate direct student level support into their work day. (page 13)	Direct student level support to teachers can not occur during class time. Some schools have found time for student level support in their workday, while other schools still struggle to find time to implement student level support.			
7. Review action plans among various departments on a annual basis. (page 14)	Staff in two departments independently indicated the intention to work more closely with each other; however, the staffs had not discussed the intention with each other.			

Page numbers correspond to recommendation location in this report.

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